Testimony for Committee on City, County and Local Affairs, Arkansas House of Representatives

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Pew

Arkansas' housing costs are treading all-time highs

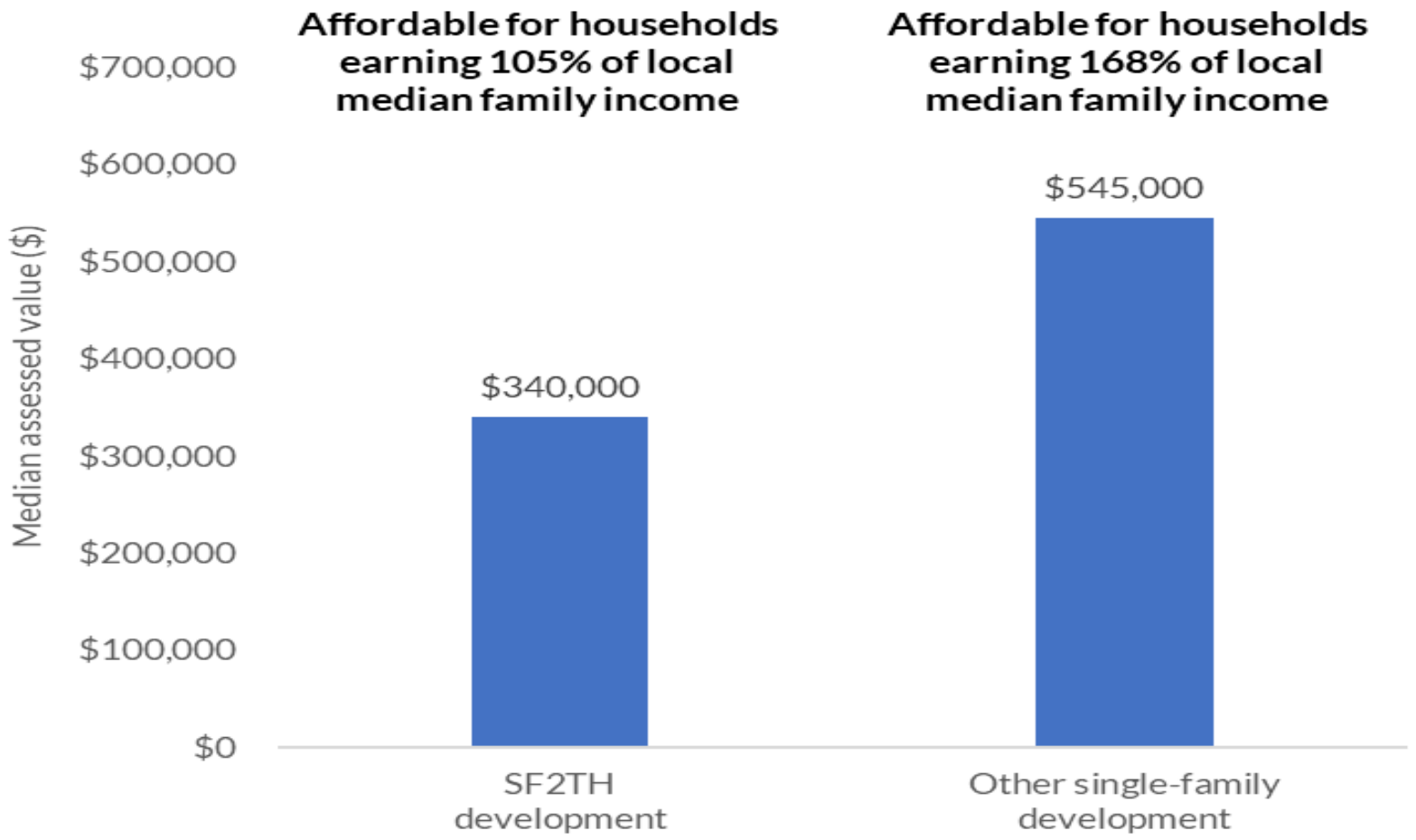
- Housing shortage of 6,400 homes is primary issue (4-7 million nationally)
- Home prices were 51% higher in 2025 than they were in 2018
- Arkansas' housing inventory is only 77% of 2018 level
- 40% of Arkansas renters are spending more than 30% of income on rent
- Household size has reached all-time low; 64% of households have 1 or 2 people

Allow homebuyers to buy “starter” homes on smaller land parcels

Reduce minimum lot size *(states: ID, ME, KS, TX, VT)*

Allow multiple homes per lot and/or allow splitting of lots *(states: CA, ID, ME, MT, OR, WA, VT)*

Houston: new small-lot homes cost less than other new homes



Source: "Here Come The Tall, Skinny Houses" by Jake Wegmann, Aabiya Noman Baqai, and Josh Conrad

Let churches and nonprofits build homes on their land

(Photo by careynieuwhof.com)

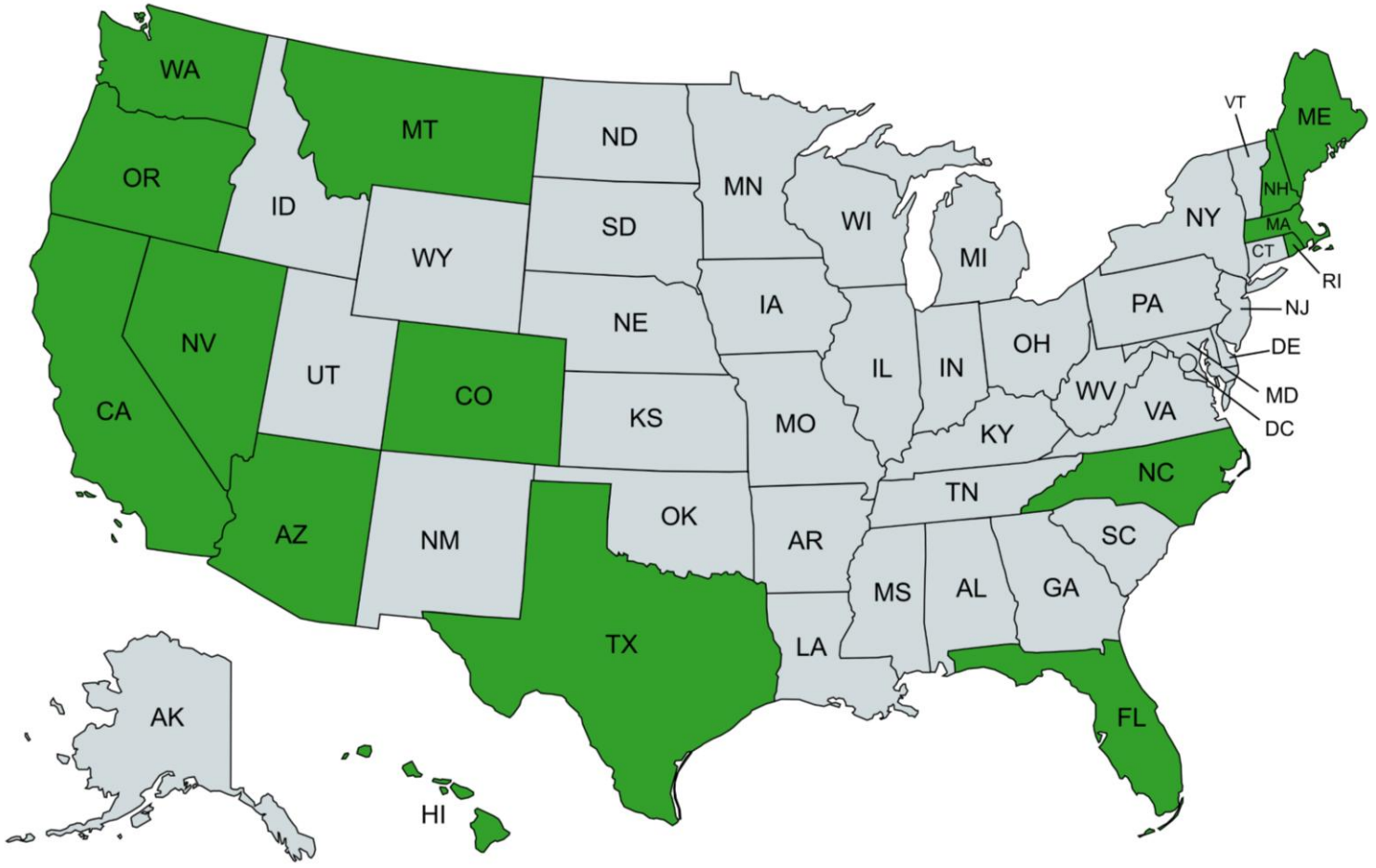
Allowing faith institutions, schools, and nonprofits to build housing on land they already own

Enacted by 7 states: CA, CO, FL, NJ, RI, VA, WA

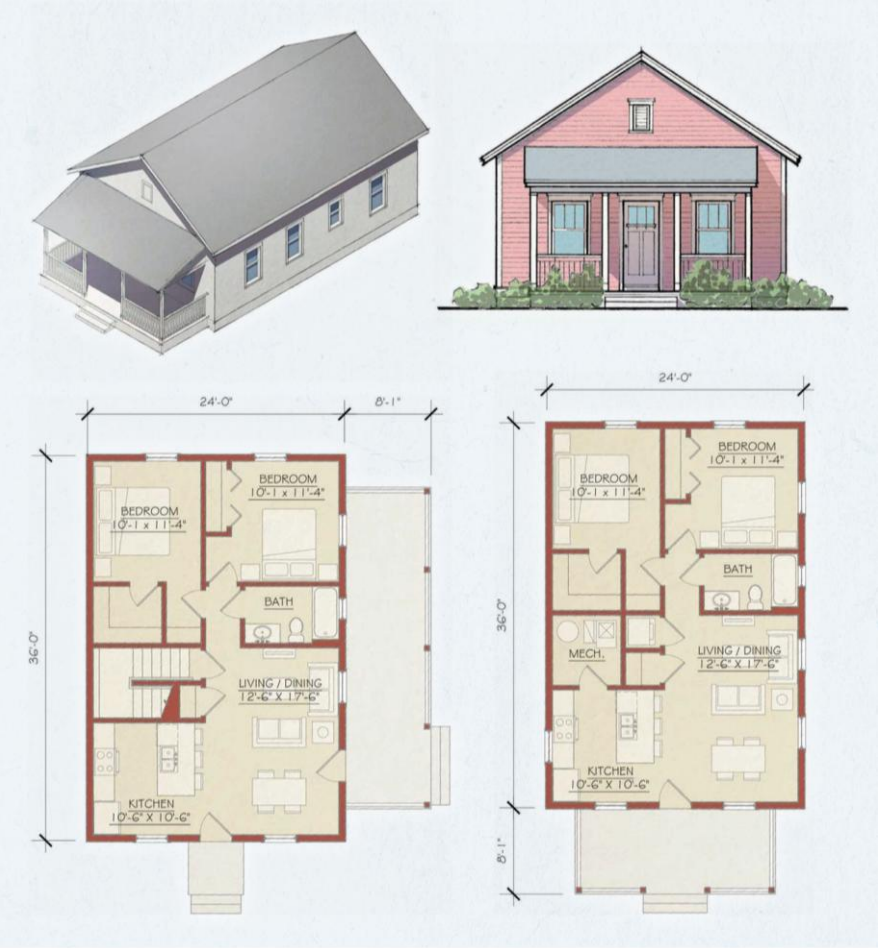
Legalizing apartments and townhomes in commercial areas

(Photo by Stephen Rees licensed under Creative Commons)

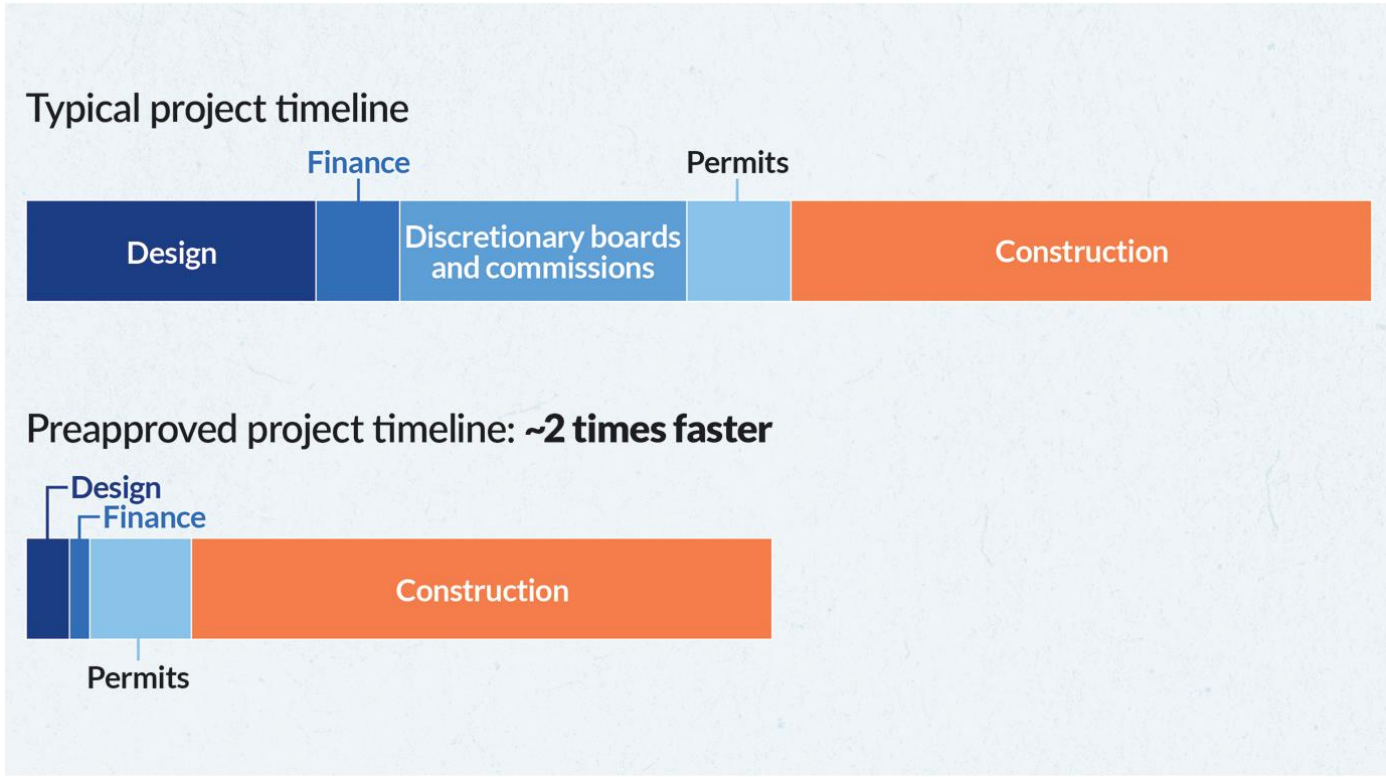
16 states have expanded housing options near jobs or transit



Preapproved plans



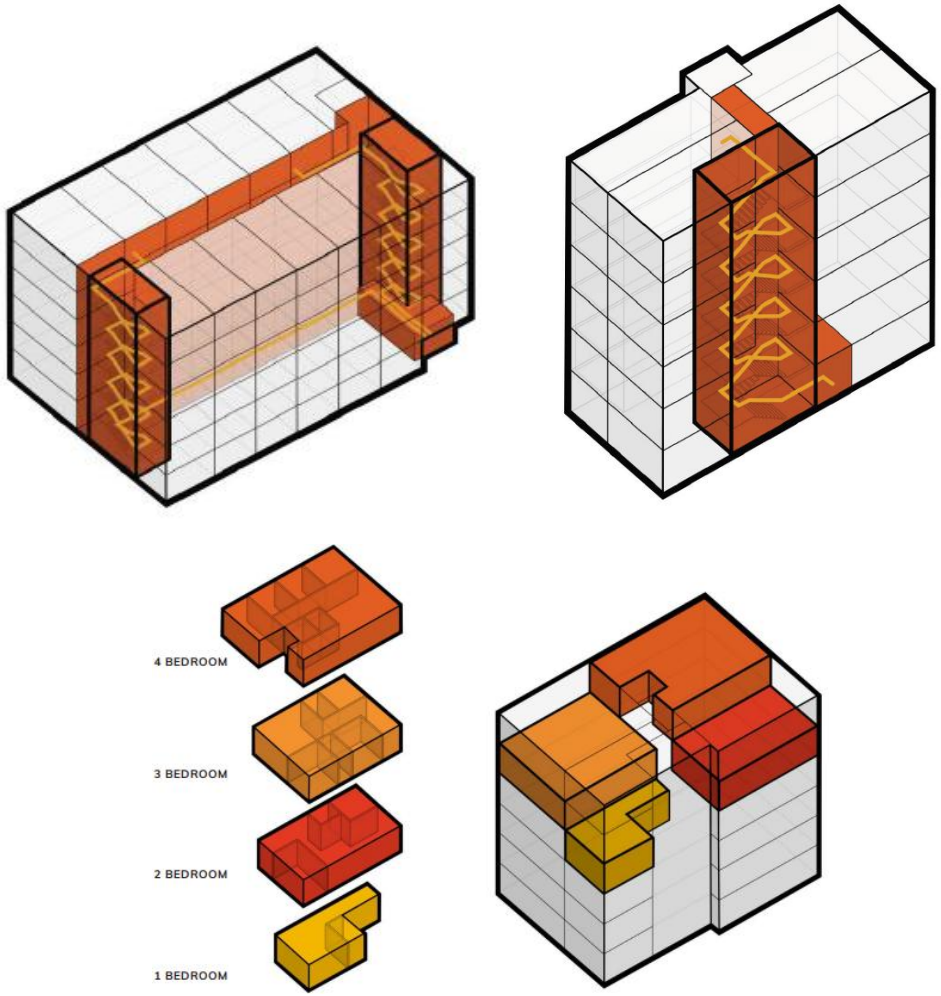
Source: Build South Bend Toolkit



Reducing costs for small apartment buildings

- Divide between 1-2 unit homes (IRC) and 3+ unit homes (IBC)
- IBC drives up complexity and costs for small apartment buildings
- Requirements include: fire sprinklers, commercial-grade alarm systems, accessibility measures, intensive design specs., stringent stormwater requirements
- NC, RI, TN, UT allow small apartment buildings to meet same standard as single family homes

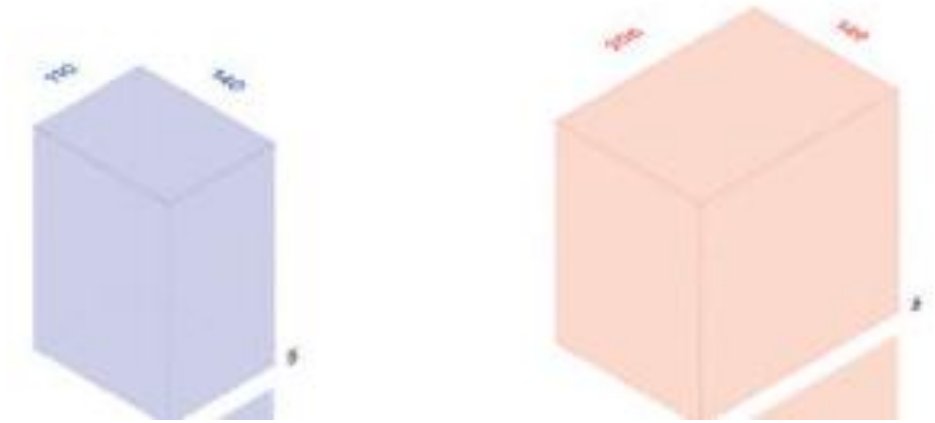
Single-stair apartment buildings



- Cost savings: **6-13% lower construction costs**, accounting for additional fire protection
- **Family-sized** apartments
- Better light and ventilation
- **Fit on smaller, infill lots**
- New apartments, incl. single stair, have **1/6 fire death rate** of other housing types
- **16 states** have enacted laws advancing single-stair 4-6 story apartments

Elevators in U.S. cost 3X more than in other rich countries

Île-de-France, France 2019	Pennsylvania, USA 2021
Otis Gen2 MRL electric traction	Schindler 3300 MRL electric traction
€31,000 + €6,200 VAT $62,839	$160,000 $176,037



Source: Center for Building in North America

Washington State enacted 2026 law that directs State Building Code Council to adopt standards "to allow passenger **elevators no larger than those that accommodate a wheelchair for apartment buildings with at most six stories and at most 24 units.**"

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